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ABSTRACT

Ethiopia, a country with 82 distinctly different languages and ethnic groups, has recently emerged from decades of civil war. In the process of restoring civilian rule, alliances have formed between a wide spectrum of local interest groups. Education generally, and language policy more specifically, continues to be one of the most contentious elements of the Ethiopian social and political scene. After enduring centuries of rule by Amharic speaking "Northerners," new regional authorities have elected to purge the Amharic language from the teaching curriculum, in favor of local languages for the primary years and English in the secondary schools. These reforms entail the translation and publication of massive quantities of textbooks, the redeployment of former staff and teaching resources, and the development of new regional and local educational authorities. This paper surveys data from an ongoing field research project, which included an examination of the Ethiopian Teachers' Training Institute. The school was located in Bale, where the Orominya language was adopted into the curriculum. This analysis explores the strength and appropriateness of the curriculum, identifies sources of both failure and innovation, and highlights many of the difficulties inherent in the imposition of major educational reform under severe resource constraints. (Author/LL)

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Educational Reform and Teacher Education in Ethiopia: Does the Tail Wag the Dog?

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Abstract

Ethiopia, the second most populous African country, has only recently emerged from decades of brutal and socially taxing civil war. The "provisional government of Ethiopia" is presently at the end of a two year mandate to develop a constitution, hold democratic elections, and restore civil authority to one of Africa's most diverse countries. In the process of restoring civilian rule, alliances have necessarily formed between a wide spectrum of local interest groups. In a country with 82 distinctly different languages and ethnic groups, this is no small matter.

Education generally, and language policy, more specifically, continues to be one of the most contentious elements of the Ethiopian social and political scene. After enduring centuries of rule by Amharic speaking "Northerners", new regional authorities have elected to purge the Amharic language from the teaching curriculum, in favor of local languages for the primary years, and English in the secondary schools. The result has been one of the most dramatic attempts to reform a modern educational system ever undertaken, entailing the translation and publication of massive quantities of textbooks, the redeployment of former staff and teaching resources, and the development of new regional and local educational authorities.

This paper surveys data from an ongoing field research project which included the examination of an Ethiopian Teachers' Training Institute (TTI). The school was located in Bale, the Eastern portion of Ethiopia, where the Orominya language has only recently been adopted into the curriculum. The analysis explores the strength and appropriateness of the curriculum, identifying particular sources of both failure and of innovation. Utilizing teacher training and morale as an entry point, the paper highlights many of the difficulties inherent in the imposition of major educational reform under severe resource constraints.

Over the past decade, Ethiopia, Africa's second most populous country, has consistently received the dubious distinction of being classified as o e of the five or ten poorest countries in the world [World Bank, 1983-1984]. It should not be surprising, therefor, that Ethiopia also has one of the lowest schooling participation rates worldwide - less than 25% of the population is estimated to have ever attended any type of primary school [TGOE,1991].

The end to civil war in Ethiopia, brokered by the United States in May,1991, brought an end to fifteen years of the ruling military junta, known as the Dergue. The present government of Ethiopia is a "provisional government" composed of a coalition with a mandate that extends until national elections are held in 1994. It is essentially run by the Northern Tigreans, the TPLF operating under a provisional constitution, however, it was created with an alliance of a number of distinct ethnically diverse liberation movements.

One result of the multi-ethnic alliance governing Ethiopia has been a newfound sensitivity regarding the appropriateness of language instruction in the vernacular. Since the beginning of "modern" secular education in Ethiopia, which occurred under the rule of then Emperor Haile Selassie, the medium of instruction has been Amharic. Amharic is a semitic language with a unique script, derived from the ancient language of Geez, which is still studied by clergy members of the Ethiopian Coptic church . Historically, Amharic has been the lingua francas of the land, an important link

considering that Ethiopia is composed of at least 82 distinct linguistic groups [Levine, 1974].

Of note here, is that school language policy was such a contentious issue, that policy guidelines were formulated based on the charter mandate negotiated in 1991. With specific reference to chapter two of the provisional constitution, it recognizes "the right of self-determination of all peoples and as indicated in section "A" has underlined "peoples' right to defend their rights, develop their history and culture as well as use and nurture their languages."[TGOE, Dec.1991]. These guidelines go on to specify the exact nature of educational policy, as follows:

"Languages of Medium of Instruction

1.Primary Education

1.2 In accordance with the recommendations of the Ministry of Education, **use Oromigna, Tigrigna, Welaitigna, and Sidamigna as medium of instruction for grades 1-6 starting the 1991/92 academic year and provide lessons for each language as a subject.**

1.3 Conduct studies on future use of other nationality languages as mediums of instruction as soon as possible while in the meantime continuing to provide education as before in such areas.

1.4 Since the language of communication of the Benishangul nationality is Arabic the medium of instruction will be the same"[TGOE, Dec.1991].

Thus, the policy decision of the TGOE was to transform the Amharic primary curriculum, grades 1-6, from its historical Amharic base, to at least four different languages, all within a single year. It is necessary to remind the reader that in Ethiopia today, there are upwards of 40,00 primary school teachers, all of whom, until 1991, were teaching and had been taught exclusively in Amharic. Although no mention was made of textbook translation, curricular revision, or the location or availability of teaching staff regarding this systemic reform, the aforementioned policy guidelines did not ignore the implementation component entirely. Under the section entitled "Training of Primary School Teachers" is the following:

"At present pedagogy and psychology are given in English in the TTIs (teacher training institutes), while other subjects are offered in Amharic. In light of the use of nationality languages as medium of instruction in primary schools:

2. **Starting the 1992/93 academic year, training of primary school teachers will be, as needed, in the different nationality languages."**

In general terms, the educational reform, as outlined in the 1991 guidelines, was no less than the complete linguistic overhaul of the entire educational system. The four languages specifically mentioned, Oromigna, Tigrigna, Welaitigna, and Sidamigna comprise respectively 30%, 9.5%, 1.6%, and 2.9% of the Ethiopian population, reflecting over 45% of the educational facilities [TGOE, Dec1991]. This reform, as dictated, (and implemented) was to occur over the course of one year: all curricular activities were to change linguistic formats at the primary grades of one through six, as

well as at the appropriate teacher training institutions. To accomplish this task, resources were redistributed on a national scale - teachers, headmasters and administrators were moved from one location to another, at the national, primary, and teacher training levels. As a point of entry, this paper examines the effects of wide scale reform on the teacher training process, shortly after transition.

Teacher Training in Ethiopia: background of teaching staff:

Although very few Ethiopian teacher educators and directors have professional teacher training education, the majority of them have a BA or BSc degree, typically in the subject for which they are teaching [Bekele and Zewdie, 1994]. Most of them have had some direct teaching experience, either at the primary, or secondary levels. In two institutes surveyed it was found that nearly 60 percent of the faculty had been former teachers themselves [Bekele and Zewdie, 1994].

At present, there is only one program offering a Bachelor of Education degree (in Pedagogical Science) located in Bahir-Dar, situated 565 KM north west of the capital city, Addis Ababa [Addis Ababa University, 1984]. This rather small program (30 students, of which only a few are enrolled in the bachelors degree program), was established in 1966, and has kept the same essential curriculum for the past ten years - there has been no need to revise the academic catalog during this period. The Bhar-Dar teacher's college offers diploma level course work in Adult Education, Amharic,

English and Geography, Math, and Physics, as well as the BS in Pedagogical Science Degree. A reasonably wide range of course offerings are provided, with at least twenty five courses designed specifically around teaching pedagogy and practices, research, management, and comparative education. There are ten faculty members dedicated to the pedagogical science department, of which nearly half have graduate degrees from foreign universities, principally the USA and England [Addis Ababa University, 1984].

By 1984, the teacher's college produced 227 degree and 397 diploma graduates in education. Considering the institutional demands of a country of 60 million people, with the requisite national planners, administrators, inspectors and specialists, as well as twelve different teacher training institutes, such figures strongly suggest that there is a serious dearth of adequately trained personnel in the teacher training profession (however, there is an additional program in educational administration on the Addis Ababa campus). The college catalog itself ominously points out, under a section entitled "objectives of the college", that "For various practical reasons, the College has been forced to look for objectives other than the original objectives, which are still officially professed to be intact, ..to train primary, TTI instructors, and...educational officers and supervisors at various levels" [Addis Ababa University, 1984]. Unfortunately, the prevailing objectives are not disclosed in the catalog, presumably better left discovered by the newly enrolled student at a later date.

Teacher Training in Ethiopia: the facilities

Presently, there are twelve teacher training institutes operating in Ethiopia, each with an average enrollment of just over 600 students. These are residential colleges that draw students who have graduated from grade 12 secondary school for a period of eleven months. The oldest institute is over 40 years old, however, the majority were constructed within the last fifteen years, in order to meet the ambitious (and unfortunately deficient) educational aspirations of the former regime. It is worth noting that formal sector employment is severely limited in Ethiopia, however, teachers salaries are considered meager, (currently starting at just over $40 per month), and is considered the occupation of last resort.

The marginalization of the teaching profession extends to the teacher training process, as well. Although the reader is advised to consider the general level of resource availability in a country as poor as Ethiopia, it is nonetheless informative to consider the absolute conditions under which the aforementioned educational transformation is taking place. For this reason, a general description of the institutional resources follows:

The government allotment for food and housing expenses to the teacher training institutes is a meager $.35 per day, per pupil. One TTI director complained bitterly of the difficulty in adequately feeding students on such a small amount of money.

Informally, it was disclosed that many students are forced to subsidize their training year by taking out loans from family and friends for the duration of their studies (students receive no stipends, and must supply their own transportation and incidental expenses out of pocket). There was an acute shortage of water in one TTI visited. As a result, at the end of each school day, numerous students are seen making the trek to the town water supply, jerry can in hand. At the designated location in town, a couple of miles from the college, long lines of mostly women form around the single well. (I was told later, that the former director of the college had paid $1,000 a number of years ago to fix a water pump on the premises; the pump was not fixed, nor was it ever returned).

Students are typically housed twelve or more to a room, grouped by gender, in bunk beds around the perimeter. In one TTI, 72 female students were observed living in one room , 58 males in another [Bekele and Zewdie, 1994]. A visit to the "clinic" in one TTI provided a disturbing insight into the relative quality of the institution: the room was barren with the exception of a single scale and one empty dispensary, it was clearly unhygienic, and looked as though it had not been cleaned, or even utilized, in a number of years. This particular TTI was a forty minute drive to the nearest hospital, yet the entire institution comprising over 600 persons had access to a single vehicle - one 20 year old Land Rover.

A visit to the library of the same aforementioned TTI produced equally depressing

revelations. There were only a half dozen books less than five years old - four dictionaries and two books of famous quotations. All of the volumes covering history and psychology were at least 25 years old. The only magazines were a few copies of Soviet and Chinese propaganda. On one side of the small library was a collection of the school books in use in Ethiopia. Unfortunately, the majority were in Amharic, which was not the language being taught in this particular institute. The austere - virtually dysfunctional - nature of libraries at TTI's in Ethiopia are more the rule than the exception, and reflect longstanding financial constraints as well as general neglect. The unavailability of newly translated materials has been cited as a particularly distressing weakness [Bekele and Zewdie].

The institute director of the aforementioned TTI was well aware of the shortage and resource constraints that impeded academic progress. In addition to the obvious plant limitations, he cited inadequate teaching materials, insufficient teaching staff (there were 21 all male teachers for the 530 students), limited duplication facilities, and a shortage of furniture. Even replacement light bulbs, apparently, were considered a severe resource constraint. Interestingly, the director twice mentioned a non-functioning science lab, for which there was no lab equipment (why this was an issue, when primary teachers would be unlikely to encounter anything more robust than a chalkboard, remains a mystery).

The program of study at the teacher training institutes in Ethiopia are essentially similar

among the twelve different colleges, consisting of ten months of full time study followed by one month of practice teaching in an urban or semi-urban school. Pedagogy, psychology, amharic, english , agricultural science, home economics, physical education and math are required subjects for all students. Electives consist of art, music, and handicrafts. Students elect (or are assigned) one of four different majors (english, amharic, social science, or science), for which there is a prescribed minor associated with their study. For example, students majoring in social science or science are required to study art as a minor, while those majoring in english or amharic are required to minor in music and handicrafts (table 1).

Course of Study for Ethiopian Primary School Teachers

Language of Instruction.	credit hours	subject	Student/major enrolled
English	5	Pedagogy	all students
English	4	Psychology	all students
Orominya	7	Social Science	25% who major
""	3	Orominya	25% who major
""	3	English	25% who major
""	3	Amharic	all
""	7	Natural Science	25% who major
""	4	Mathematics all	
""	2	Home Eonomics	all
""	2	Agriculture	all
""	2	Phys ed.	all
""	2	Handicrafts	Social science majors
""	2	Music	Oromo/English majors
""	2	Art	Natural Science majors

Table 1

In one TTI it was observed that all classes were taught in the local language (orominya), with the exception of pedagogy and psychology. Further classroom observation in this same institute yielded a number of somewhat disconcerting revelations. In most of the observed classes, students, seated in rows facing forward, lacked any kind of book or instructional aids. Classes consisted of chalkboard notes that were assiduously copied into the notebooks of each student. In general, course content seemed to be designed around the standard Ethiopian secondary school curriculum. For instance, students in a math class were not learning how to teach math to the rural primary schools for which they were destined, rather, they were learning polynomials and basic algebra - not subjects one would expect to find in the 1-6 primary structure. Similarly, natural science students were learning force of movement physics and social science students were inexplicably learning conversions from centigrade to fahrenheit.

Deficiencies extended well beyond the course curriculum. Pedagogic students, for example, appeared to be learning useful and relevant material: how to use visual aids, promote group work, and encourage interaction and discussion. A number of essential items were written on the blackboard, to be copied by the students into their workbooks. The instructor, however, favored a more traditional learning approach - students were seated facing the teacher, were asked to repeat, verbatim, the tenants of good pedagogy, visual aids were not utilized, and I was told that work groups were not the preferred modus operandi of the teacher.

A discussion with the director of the institute served to help explain many of the inconsistencies regarding the observed academic curriculum. Although this particular TTI was established in 1980, the current director, as well as most of the academic staff, have been employed less than one year. As a result of the new language policy implemented over the past year, the experienced teachers were either dismissed or transferred to regions and schools with a match for their particular language skills. At present, most of the teachers were transferred from regional high schools 12 months ago, and all 21 were male (approximately 110 of the 530 students were female) . Other than a one week course in teaching orominya with a latin script (the language of the TTI) , they had received no training or preparation for this new task. Furthermore, because most of the teachers came from urban or semi-urban towns with secondary schools, they had no experience with the rural schools for which they were preparing teachers for. The director himself, only one year out of college, frankly admitted he had never visited a rural school.

The result, then, of the extraordinarily rapid implementation of a political guideline regarding linguistic instruction, was the practical downgrading of the teacher training: the particular institute observed might be, roughly, the equivalent of a typical Ethiopian urban high school. The observed curriculum was an ad-hoc amalgamation of whatever the former high school teachers were able to provide - in most cases, there was little relevancy or practical application for the student's new career (the exceptions to these unfortunate circumstances follow).

*Two Examples: Teacher Motivation and Curricular Development

Despite the aforementioned resource constraints, it is important to consider that, all things being relative, the conditions of teacher training in Ethiopia, while fraught with obstacles, nevertheless surpass institutional capabilities in many other domains. The facilities, while sparse, had indoor plumbing, electric lighting, furniture, and even glass windows. Such is not the case with the primary schools these teachers are training for - there they will have to cope with minimal conditions, dirt floors, waddle construction, and a lack of even the most elementary resources, such as school books, paper and pencils. It is particularly striking, therefor, to encounter examples of creative and effective curricular development. That such activities were able to take place in an environment severely constrained by even the most elementary resources is a reminder that effective education is not a matter of economics, as much as it is one of commitment and creativity. It is in the hopes of promoting such endeavor that the following two illustrative examples are provided.

Walking into one English class in the Robe TTI, the observer is immediately struck by an alteration in the classroom structure - rather than students facing forward, copying blackboard outlines into notebooks, students are divided into groups, sitting around small tables, participating collectively. The teacher is just as likely to be participating in one group or another, as lecturing from the front of the classroom. There is a din inside the room indicative of appreciation for the learning process - the atmosphere is

almost electrifying - students are debating issues with each other, the teacher is mediating the results. Discussions with this particular teacher revealed that he was suffering from many of the same complaints brought out by the director, and other teaching staff. There was a dramatic shortage of teaching materials. There was no defined curriculum appropriate to the local language. The materials they had access to were culturally inappropriate, reflecting literal translations from ethnic groups and geographical regions that did not apply to their particular teaching situation. Even the names of characters featured in primary readers were said to be unfamiliar and difficult to pronounce by members of other ethnic groups.

Unlike the majority of teachers observed at the TTI, this individual made concerted efforts to overcome limitations and shortages. Rather than rely upon the ministry of education to design and produce culturally relevant training material, this teacher was in the process of constructing his own training manual. Each of his students was sent away on their annual leave with a critically important assignment - to obtain music, short stories, parables, and any other oral traditions from their communities. As they returned from their month's holiday, they offered audio tapes and transcripts of their own communities to the instructor, who managed to duplicate the information and incorporate the material into his own classroom. In less than two years he had assembled a formidable selection of stories and songs in the Orominya language. The teachers he was training left equipped with the tools and the experience of instilling relevancy and enthusiasm for the learning process absent elsewhere.

The second example of unusually resourceful and creative instructor was the other English teacher at the Roble TTI (perhaps these two individuals, both facing the same constraints, reinforced each other regarding their individual goals and apparent self motivation). As with the other English instructor, the students in this particular classroom were also divided into groups, sitting around small tables. The teacher was in the process of demonstrating pedagogical practices on a home-made language instruction board - alternately combining sounds into words, words into compound words. The stress, most unusually, was not on the material, but rather, on the process by which he expected his teachers to convey the material. Thus, he emphasized the importance of engagement, by asking students to lead the process, as well as suggesting an order of introduction that matched the scale of difficulty for the task at hand. He reminded the teachers what they would be doing in their own classrooms, how to proceed, inspire class participation, and generally enhance the learning process by utilizing his simple yet effective learning tool.

At the enthusiastic insistence of this particular instructor, I was later taken to a small primary school on the grounds of the TTI. This was the only "model school" in operation among any of the twelve institutes, and reflected the desire of the former director to test and develop new curricula by the teaching staff.

This particular English teacher had done an exemplary job in preparing a class of grade 1 pupils with a unique curriculum. He started his research program shortly after

arriving at the TTI, and was actively testing the effectiveness of his innovations at the model school, tracking the same students into grade 2. A local NGO had provided sufficient funds for recording six lessons on video cassette, as well as publishing a limited edition of his handbook and teaching strategies [Haile, 1993].

Taking a tour of Ato Endalkachew's second grade class was the most unusual experience in classroom teaching I had witnessed in Ethiopia. Upon his arrival, the students literally burst out with the enthusiasm he was able to share with them. Rather than the usual procedure of rote learning, the students were encouraged to participate in a highly interactive and animated way. One by one, they were called upon to demonstrate their proficiency at the head of the class, each student getting an unusual amount of personal feedback and support for their efforts. The instructor and students alike clearly were enjoying the process - it was perhaps their favorite "game" or portion of the school day. Not only did they clearly look forward to these lessons - the students were observed to demonstrate a surprising proficiency not witnessed elsewhere.

The pilot study report written by this particular instructor was quite methodical in both describing the teaching innovations employed as well as in analyzing the comparative benefits of the method. To what extent his findings might be generally employed, or were simply the "Hawthorne effect" of teachers and students who were singled out for the study, cannot be deduced from the document, as the study was quite small. In

any case, there was an undeniably enthusiastic commitment to the teaching and educational process absent in the standard curricula, that could only assist the learning process.

The method employed relied primarily on the utilization of home-made flash cards, as well as immersion techniques - at no time, during the learning process, did instruction occur in any language other than English. A natural flow of conversation was encouraged, referred to as the "direct method" of instruction [Richards, 1986]. A control group of first grade students was compared with a group taught by teachers exposed to the new method, as well as those taught by the researcher/instructor himself. Although the study was limited to twenty children of each group, those students taught with the new method appeared to demonstrate remarkably superior achievement gains. In discussions with the instructor, I was informed that the participation in student learning extended outside the classroom, to the parents as well. He maintained that interested parents, encouraged by these newly inquisitive english speaking children, sought him out to provide translations of common words that their children were asking them to provide. As a result, his efforts extended even beyond the classroom, into the local community itself.

It was clear, through conversations with this particular individual, that he had considerable motivation for both his own research, as well as for the general discipline. He was also not unaware that many of the teachers he was training lacked such

enthusiasm - whether it was due to economic constraints, the newness of the job, or just a mismatch between individual preferences and the occupational market available. It was his opinion that, short of the obvious interventions meant to improve teachers salary and working conditions, there was a need to focus on the intrinsic rewards obtained through successful teaching and community interaction.

Evaluation of the language reform

Policy reform in a country as large and impoverished as that of Ethiopia presents a dilemma of nearly herculean proportions. Gross primary enrollment ratios have never exceeded 35 percent, and have recently dropped below 25 percent. With overall population growth estimated at over 3 percent, significant resources will need to be committed simply to maintain current levels of rather limited access to education.

Language policy continues to be one of the most volatile elements on the agenda of national educational planners. Culture and language are so inextricably linked, that the failure to promote one may signal the "death" of the other. Although it might appear to make pedagogical sense to begin teaching primary students in their mother tongue, such a policy, taken to the extremes, may only serve to further marginalize a growing nonliterate public. In Ethiopia, where there are at least 82 distinct linguistic groups, the issue of language instruction continues to mirror relationships of power, control, and access. Language policy has the potential of disrupting an already

overburdened system. Considering the difficulties encountered providing textbooks in a single language (Amharic), one can only speculate as to the implications of providing five, ten, or even several dozen linguistic alternatives.

The subject of this paper, however, is a focus on teacher training. For this, it is necessary to review the implications of a political solution to one endemic problem in Africa - the rise of ethnicity and fracturing of national cohesiveness, occurring with repetitive and increasingly disastrous results (one need only look at Rwanda, South Africa, Nigeria, and Ethiopia as a few of the more extreme cases of this phenomenon). The political decision: the recommendation to begin teaching in regional languages, to occur at all primary levels and at teacher training colleges, virtually overnight, has wrecked considerable havoc on the entire educational system.

The effects on a single teacher training college, which completed the language transition one year previously, were evident at virtually every turn. The key administrators and teachers had less than one year's experience, reflecting their compliance to political will. In order to accomplish this major overhaul in such a rapid time, qualified teachers and administrators were transferred either to other locations, or made redundant. To fill the necessary vacancies at such short order,(after all, there is only one degree granting educational program in Ethiopia) necessitated the recruitment of high school teachers at the teacher training college. These new teacher trainers, while skilled and experienced in their particular discipline and ethnic language,

had little or no exposure to primary education, rural education, or teacher training preparation. Rather than research or attempt to develop an appropriate curriculum, the majority of these newly promoted instructors simply continue to teach from their high school curriculum - ensuring the impracticality and irrelevancy of the entire training process. The resulting confusion has led to what will undoubtedly be a "bubble" of inadequately trained and hastily produced primary teachers - and this situation will most probably remain until and unless additional resources and specific training is provided to the TTI's.

It is worth noting that in specific and particular cases, significant creativity and enthusiasm can result in effective institutional change, despite the obvious resource constraints and bottlenecks. The two English teachers discussed in this paper, who developed their own curriculum, demonstrate this limited yet commendable element. Such activities should be nurtured and promoted, if there is any expectation that the new language policy will be a successful innovation.

Summation and Policy Recommendations

This paper is entitled " Educational Reform and Teacher Education in Ethiopia: Does the Tail Wag the Dog?" because of the observed distance between political goals, and pragmatic implementation. In this case, while I believe the "tail" represents the politicians who dictate policy from the top down, the "dog" represents the pre-existing

educational structure, it's inputs and outputs, that collectively produce what we refer to in the modern sense as public education. Teachers, and specifically their production, preparation, training, and motivation, lie at the heart of the educational process. History has demonstrated that the inability to deal adequately with teachers in their central role condemns even the most enlightened educational reform to failure.

In the case of the Ethiopian language reform, the goals were undoubtedly rational - to address the sensibilities of various ethnic minorities who have long felt cultural and political domination, many of whom fought long and hard for their respective independence. The observed results, however, may well produce the opposite effect. There exists the strong and potentially equally volatile likelihood that education in non - Amharic speaking Ethiopia will become even more regressive. Shortages of textbooks and training manuals abound throughout the entire system. An entire generation of teachers are being neglected, insofar as the most rudimentary training has been diluted beyond significance. They will be returning to their home communities to provide critically needed education for a rapidly expanding and impoverished nation, but will be ill equipped for the task. Trained primarily in high school coursework, they will be asked to educate a rapidly growing skeptical population. In Ethiopia, parents must choose between the pragmatic outcomes of keeping young children at home to assist with farm and subsistence chores, or sending them to government schools with their associated indirect costs. As teachers appear on the scene inadequately trained and ill prepared for the task, they are more likely to keep their children at home, where

at a minimum they will gain critical economic, social, and cultural survival skills.

The objective of the Ethiopian language reform was certainly admirable - empowerment, participation, and cultural pride are all integral elements of a successful educational policy. The implementation, however, fell radically short of what was expected, primarily due to the exceptionally short time frame. Many years, rather than months, should have been scheduled into this radical transformation. It takes considerable time to establish effective curricula, at both the teacher education as well as the classroom levels. Rather than scrapping a well established policy, overnight, policy makers would have been better advised to gradually implement linguistic transformations, developing effective techniques through research and experimentation.

It remains unclear how effective even the most carefully introduced ethnic language policy might be. Considerable gains can be had from developing a lingua francas among a population as diverse as that of Ethiopia, and this must be weighed against the costs and benefits of mother tongue instruction. Even more important may be the trade offs in resource utilization. The transition to regional languages continues to be a highly expensive task, in terms of financial as well as professional resources. There are a number of credible and well researched locations for improving education in Africa: these include providing books and supplies, school feeding and health programs, radio education, in service training, and inspection and monitoring

improvements [World Bank, 1988]. Until and unless the new language policy is effectively implemented in Ethiopia, many of these inputs, that have well documented histories of improving the quality and effectiveness of African education, will by necessity remain on the back burner.

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